



**MINUTES OF THE SPECIAL MEETING
OF THE NORTH COUNTY LIBRARY AUTHORITY HELD ON
MONDAY, FEBRUARY 3, 2020, AT 7:00 P.M. AT THE LOS ALTOS HILLS COUNCIL
CHAMBERS, 26379 FREMONT ROAD, LOS ALTOS HILLS, CA**

ESTABLISHED QUORUM AT 7:07 P.M.

Quorum was established at 7:07 pm and the meeting was called to order. All Board members present. President Pepper led the Pledge of Allegiance.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Pierre Bedard - NCLA requested the Library Commission facilitate a joint meeting of all concerned parties involved in Library Redevelopment project. Mr. Bedard provided a proposed agenda. The Library Commission will set a date and invite the concerned parties.

ITEMS FOR CONSIDERATION/ACTION

1. Approval of minutes for regular meeting of 1/13/20

The Board considered draft minutes from the meeting on January 13, 2020. One modification on page 2 to clarify the request by Vice President Fligor was to draft a letter; the content was developed by the full Board. A motion was made by Courtenay Corrigan and seconded by Suzanne Epstein to approve the minutes as amended.

The motion was approved 5-0.

AYES: Corrigan, Epstein, Fligor, Hill, Pepper

NOES: None

ABSTAIN: None

ABSENT: None

2. NCLA Task Force Update

Cindy Hill, NCLA Board member and member of the NCLA Task Force, introduced Jared Boigon (TBWB Strategies) and Miranda Everitt (FM3 Research). They presented the results of a survey conducted January 7-15, 2020. The consultants noted there has not been an education campaign yet, so this is a baseline survey indicating current public sentiment regarding a library redevelopment project. This is an informational presentation; no decision will be requested tonight. Summer 2020 will be the deadline for a decision on a ballot measure.

This was a web and phone (cell and landline) based survey, contacting 437 registered voters randomly sampled in Los Altos and Los Altos Hills (in the NCLA district), reflecting the likely electorate. People were very responsive to the survey. The overall margin of error was 4.9%. Some questions were asked two ways, with the margin of error of 6.9% for those questions.

Summary conclusions from the survey include “overwhelming” initial support with 63% strongly approving library redevelopment. The disapprove result was 3%. The Woodland Library is not as well-known as the Los Altos library.

Community impression of both Los Altos and Los Altos Hills Councils were “net positive”, both over 50% satisfied. For local government agencies, these are “strong” numbers according to the Consultants.

Over 70% of respondents had a personal connection, either themselves or someone in their household, to the libraries in Los Altos. Close to 60% of respondents identified a “great need” or “some need” for additional funding for library building upgrades. The consultants emphasized the importance of this question for a funding measure and noted this indicates there is room for more education around the need for funding for library improvements. In response to a question, the consultants confirmed a bond measure requires 2/3 voter approval.

The survey evaluated two versions of language describing the levy calculation. The actual bond measure language will be similar. The results of the two versions are statistically similar, with the phrasing for every \$100 of assessed value slightly better.

The survey asked respondents why they support improvements to library, which included:

- Value libraries as a key part of society
- Prepares next generation
- Love of books
- Importance of Education
- Outdated building, need for repairs
- Overcrowded, parking

And the survey asked why respondents are opposed. Reasons given included:

- Not needed
- Costs too much – opposed to more taxes
- Other higher priorities
- Use of ebooks, less need for libraries due to technology

The number of responses indicating this project is not necessary was noted, and suggests there must be education to demonstrate the merits of the project to the community.

The survey explored lower amounts of funding and found the amount is not the critical point. The bigger issue is overcoming the hurdle that some respondents don’t see the need for library redevelopment. Consultants agreed with a question/statement to maintain the funding level already identified, but focus on emphasizing the need to the community and library users.

The survey asked about reasons people visit the library (in order of popularity): events with authors/experts, checking out books to read, lecture series, creative projects, quiet space for reading, studying, meetings, study centers. The balancing act is talking about need without a large laundry list such that voters may conclude these are a lot of “nice to haves” and not “need to haves”. In response to a question about children’s programs, which are very crowded, consultants explained parents are about one third of likely voters.

Another question asked about the importance of 27 specific features. Top responses included maintaining library buildings, citizen oversight of expenditures, upgrading earthquake safety and fire safety, providing bathrooms to children and people with disabilities, safe spaces for kids, teens. While these items generally scored over 50%, they do not reach the 2/3 threshold.

The consultants found three key themes that resonate are 1) upgrades needed based on age of building, 2) high demand demonstrated by 1,400 visits on a typical day, and 3) lack of modern facilities and technology. People do not understand the extent the building is used. Must tell the story of the building and how beloved the library is in the community.

Conclusions: the libraries are highly valued. However, support for a bond measure currently falls short of 2/3 support. Basic repairs including earthquake and fire safety, are broadly shared priorities. The need for upgrades based on high use given the age of the building is an important education element.

A statement was made about the lack of library facilities at the local charter school, which educates 20% local public school. Not all public elementary schools have libraries either.

The consultants were asked, given this result of support below the 2/3 required, would they anticipate that gap can be bridged for a successful ballot measure? Consultants responded this is a good baseline, but there is work to do. Public education is critical. Recommend another survey before the ballot decision. Many jurisdictions have been successful through effective education and communication plans. In this case there is a gap in knowledge about need. School taxes have passed in this community several times.

A question was asked about the timing of this tax when other public entities are moving forward with tax measures. On long ballots, people tend to pick local measures. With the upcoming November 2020 ballot, with expected very high turnout, will that help or hurt? The consultant responded there will be high turnout with a presidential election but it looks like an emotional, divisive election. There may be a Prop 13 measure State-wide. Yet people are likely to look at local measures differently, as indicated in the positive perception of the elected Councils.

Did the survey identify any efforts for an opposition campaign? It is important to drive community consensus. Two thirds is a tough bar to meet. Rather than focus on the wide variety of reasons to support this project, which may pit various interests against one another, the recommendation is to focus on the very high use of the existing building and why this aged structure is not sufficient to meet the community demands. This poll shows it is possible.

Another survey could be scheduled in June, which will provide several months for a communication campaign. The purpose will be to gauge support of the voters. The Task Force has done amazing work to meet with 100 key community influencers. Now the Task Force will focus on meeting with community groups, school groups, as well as mail and digital campaigns. The consultants will help craft the messaging. The Task Force will review and approve the messaging.

The City of Los Altos has experienced a few unsuccessful tax measure campaigns in the recent history which causes some concern about moving forward. And now there are upcoming measures for water, transportation.

August 7, 2020 is the filing deadline. Meetings and approval of the two Councils will be required before then. The goal is a unanimous vote from the Councils. The NCLA should discuss a roadmap at the next meeting. The Task Force is also working on a feasibility study involving private donations, which may be helpful in discussions with Councils. It was suggested a Councilmember can provide an update to the Council about the NCLA/Task Force progress.

Public Comment:

- Jean Mordo – This is a case opposite the previous measure in which the residents support but Council does not. Feeling positive about the success of a ballot measure based on this report. The problem is there may not be majority support from the Los Altos Council.
- David Struthers – Asked how the survey question was worded when asking people how much they are willing to pay. It was hard to figure out his direct cost based on the percentage of assessed value. Consultants responded the language of the ballot is guided by legal requirements; sometimes they ask a follow up question to focus more on the homeowner’s cost. There is not a flat dollar amount; each person’s amount will differ. The survey indicated price tag is not the driving factor, rather the perception of need for library improvements is important.
- Pierre Bedard – Would like an improved library, and want this issue on the ballot in November. Encouraged by the data presented tonight. There are legitimate safety concerns, for example an earthquake.

3. NCLA Financial Update

The NCLA Liaison reviewed the discussion of the NCLA Board at the January 13, 2020 meeting about pending financial issues. The Board directed a letter to be sent to the City of Los Altos with a request for action by February 14, 2020. The NCLA President and Past President signed the letter, which was sent out January 17th. No response has been received yet, the Liaison has emailed and called staff about the letter. The Liaison has had continuing discussions with County staff about the NCLA account at the County. An inquiry was made as to whether the County can serve as the NCLA Treasurer since the County will be holding the NCLA funds. The County requests a written request, which will be prepared and sent. The President will send a note to the Los Altos City Manager asking if the information requested by letter will be provided.

INFORMATIONAL ITEMS

COMMISSIONERS’ REPORTS AND COMMENTS

POTENTIAL FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS

Los Altos Hills approved the JPA Amendment for NCLA. This Amendment needs to be placed on the City of Los Altos agenda for adoption.

The NCLA Board scheduled a Special Meeting on March 16, 2020.

Discussion about an upcoming study session facilitated by the Library Commission, with a focus on consistent messaging.

Public Comment:

- Diane Schmidt – The Task Force has worked independently, but now we are entering a new phase. There is a need to communicate widely and consistently. A joint session will be helpful.
- Eric Steinle – The joint meeting concept started originally because some groups have spending limitations once a ballot measure is approved. It would be helpful to know the spending plans for all of the groups, and this needs to be coordinated.

Upcoming Meetings:

- Monday, March 16, 2020 at 6 pm at Neutra House
- Monday, May 11, 2020 at 6 pm at Neutra House

FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS:

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 9:01 pm.

SPECIAL NOTICES TO PUBLIC

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Agendas, Staff Reports and some associated documents for Financial Commission items may be viewed on the Internet at <http://losaltosca.gov/committees-commissions/nclal/meetings.html>

If you wish to provide written materials, please provide the Commission Liaison with **10 copies** of any document that you would like to submit to the Commissioners in order for it to become part of the public record.

For other questions regarding the meeting proceedings, please contact the City Clerk at (650) 947-2720.